



Weekly National Security Working Group Update

Congressman Jim Jordan (R-OH), RSC Chairman
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The National Security Working Group (NSWG) is comprised of Trent Franks, 2nd, AZ; Connie Mack, 14th, FL; Duncan Hunter, 52nd, CA; Allen West, 22nd, FL and John Fleming, 4th, LA. We look forward to providing RSC members updates on national security issues and matters using this forum. We welcome your inputs.

- Obama's Failure in the Middle East (Rep Franks)

Last Sunday, President Obama was quick to boast the liberation of Libya after the death of Muammar Gaddafi. Obama stated, "On behalf of the American people, I congratulate the people of Libya on today's historic declaration of liberation." After four decades of brutal dictatorship and eight months of deadly conflict, the Libyan people can now celebrate their freedom and the beginning of a new era of promise." Four days later, the Libyan interim government announced they will base their constitution on the Islamic religion and Sharia law. It appears there was no consideration of religious freedom or a secular constitution.

Last week, President Obama announced U.S. forces in Iraq will return by the end of the year. This was a result of the Obama Administration's failure to negotiate immunity for U.S. service members in Iraq. By withdrawing U.S. forces from Iraq, the long term security and stability of the Middle East has been compromised. As a result, the ability for the U.S. to counter Iranian influence in Iraq has been significantly degraded. The Shia majority in Iraq is closely aligned with the Shia led Iranian government. To complicate matters, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki supports Iran's nuclear ambitions. All indicators point to close ties between Baghdad and Tehran once U.S. forces leave.

Earlier this month, Syrian opposition leaders formed the Syrian National Council (SNC) in Turkey. The SNC is seeking the removal of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is a member of the SNC (the supreme leader of the MB, Mohammed Badei, declared war on the US and Israel last October). The Obama Administration has been consulting with the MB for three months to "discuss the Brotherhood's role after the ouster of President Bashar Assad." By communicating and working with the MB, the Obama Administration is inexplicably supporting the "Brotherhood's goal to make Syria into an Islamic state rather than a democracy that would protect the religious freedom of its large minority community of Christians and Kurds."¹

The Obama Administration's policies in the Middle East have failed. The result is a destabilized region that poses a direct threat to long term security and stability between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

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¹ Obama reaching out to Muslim Brotherhood in Syria; Pro-West opposition protests (2011, September 26). Retrieved from http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/WTARC/2011/me_syria1203_09_26.asp

- Belize: A Cause for Concern (Rep Mack)

The United States should be increasingly concerned with the deteriorating security situation in Belize. The small Central American nation borders Mexico and Guatemala, making it an easy target for transnational criminal organizations looking for resources, recruits, and space to operate. On September 15, 2011, President Obama added Belize to the “black list” of countries that are considered to be major drug producing states or transit nations for narcotics. Belize shares many of the same concerns that are associated with the deadly “Northern Triangle” countries, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, known for their high murder rates and the surrender of large areas of the country to gang and drug cartel control.

Escalating gang violence and drug trafficking activity are worrisome enough but according to recent media reports the government of Belize has enacted legislation to seize control over companies without providing any form of compensation. The government also introduced an amendment to the constitution that will remove the possibility of judicial review of these nationalizations. It is important that the United States monitors these developments closely as it is more important than ever that Belize maintains strong democratic values in the face of serious threats to its security.

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- U.S. Ambassador Leaves Syria After Life Threatened (Rep Fleming)

Just weeks after an Iranian plot to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to America was uncovered, the United States ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, was recalled from the country amid threats to his safety.² Syria, a steadfast ally of Iran, has killed thousands of its citizens in a bloody crackdown that has raged for months. Ambassador Ford visited demonstrators and democracy activists in cities such as Hama, where Syrian security forces and armed thugs have carried out brutal attacks. Mr. Ford vocally criticized the actions of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and disputed the government’s version of events. State-run media has begun an incitement campaign against Ambassador Ford, heightening concerns about his safety, especially after dozens of Syrians assaulted his motorcade in Damascus this September.

In response to Mr. Ford’s departure, Syria also recalled its ambassador to the United States, Imad Moustapha. The Syrian embassy is suspected of collecting information on Syrian dissidents, and then using that information against their family members still living in Syria. As President Assad tries everything to avoid the fate of Muammar Gaddafi, the United States must maintain pressure on his regime and give a voice to the demands of the protesters. This is the best way to allow the Syrian people to rid themselves of the Assad dictatorship, to deprive Iran of one of its most strategic allies, and to enhance the security of the U.S. and its allies in the region. A free and democratic Syria that respects the rights of all its people, including Muslim and Christian minorities, will pose less of a threat to Iraq, Lebanon, and Israel, and will demonstrate that regimes do not survive when they respond to the peaceful protests of their people with unrestricted violence.

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Questions/comments regarding RSC NSWG items can be directed to Cyrus Artz Cyrus.Artz@mail.house.gov

² Anthony Shadid, “U.S. Ambassador to Syria Leaves Damascus Amid Threats to Safety,” *New York Times*, 24 October 2011.